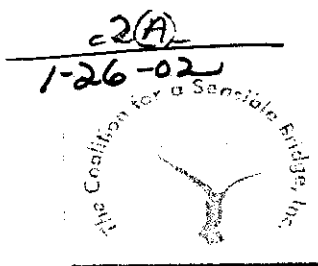


Mayor Donley



*Received by CC; Sent to
CM*

future

THE COALITION FOR A SENSIBLE BRIDGE, INC.

P. O. Box 1016
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January 26, 2002

Mayor Kerry J. Donley and
Members of City Council
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

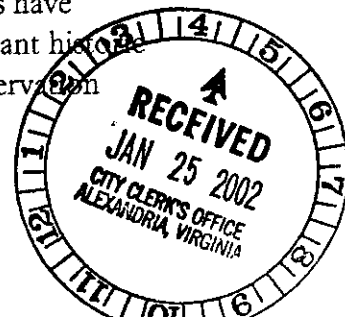
Re: Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace Apartment Complexes

Dear Mayor Donley and Members of City Council:

The Coalition for a Sensible Bridge, Inc. is very much concerned by the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) purchase of the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace complexes. These two complexes represent some of the most desirable low to moderately priced residential housing in the City of Alexandria.

We are aware that VDOT does not intend to keep ownership of these properties after the reconstruction of the Wilson Bridge is complete. CSB is fearful that whoever buys the properties will find it expedient to demolish the buildings and replace them with expensive condominium units. This would result in the displacement of hundreds of residents who will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to locate comparable housing in the City of Alexandria.

We, therefore, are requesting that you, the Alexandria City Council, make every effort to preserve the viability of these complexes by whatever means necessary. We recommend, at a minimum, because the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace complexes have historic significance, that the city demand the Commonwealth of Virginia grant historic easements on the properties to the Alexandria Historic Restoration and Preservation Commission.

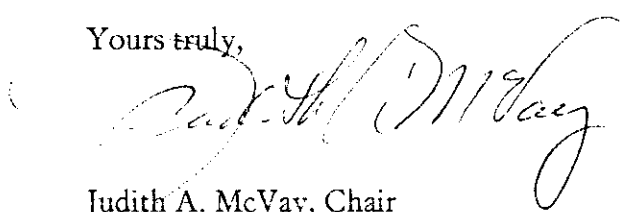


Furthermore, we recommend that discussions with VDOT begin immediately and include residents of the two complexes, representation from CSB, and a representative from AHRPC.

CSB recognizes that it will be considerably more likely that the city can get a satisfactory arrangement to protect the property from VDOT than from any new owner.

It is imperative for the City Council to act quickly and decisively to save some of our city's last and best affordable housing stock.

Yours truly,



Judith A. McVay, Chair

Cc: Charles Trozzo, Chairman, Alexandria Historic Restoration and Preservation
Commission

Eileen Fogarty, Director, Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning

ROUGH DRAFT**CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
Public Hearing Meeting — January 26, 2002
Partial Verbatim – Public Discussion (a)**

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Judy McVay, 202 North Columbus Street, read the letter from the Coalition For a Sensible Bridge, Inc., dated January 26, 2002, expressing its concern of the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) purchase of the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace complexes. The Coalition requested that the City Council make every effort to preserve the viability of these complexes by whatever means necessary. (A copy of the letter is on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

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McVay: Let me add that there are a couple of things that somebody brought this up to her last night and that in light of the funding issue now, there's starting to be some noise about scaling back the project, and in view of that, if it's downsized, it may not be necessary to raze any of those buildings, so, we would ask too that you look into talking to VDOT about holding off on razing the one building they got planned until they actually know what they are going to build. It may not be necessary to take that building down. And also, I have spoken to Charles Trozzo, the chairman of the long-named commission. He was very receptive to the Commission working on this with us.

Donley: I think that the thrust of the letter in terms of trying to preserve that affordable housing is a goal we should work towards. I would agree with you, Judy. In our discussions with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project folks, we meet with them monthly, they are not moving in any sense towards scaling back the project at least at this point.

McVay: I know they're not.

- Donley: And if there is a funding issue that isn't resolved and certainly they are not going to get any more help if they're able to get the existing help from Richmond, and I don't think the federal government is going to step forward. I mean, if for some reason the nature of the project changes, I mean we would obviously try to save that one building. But, I mean thus far, the relocations from that building have gone very well.
- McVay: We're aware of that. This was something that somebody brought up to me last night and I thought, well, you know that's an interesting aspect and there may be a way to ask them to hold off on razing until something is really finalized because this project is not final at all because of the lack of funding for it. Which is, I might say, something that we have been talking about for years, the design is something they are not going to be able to build.
- Donley: Well certainly, you know the Vice Mayor and I along with the City Manager meet with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge folks every month, and so we will put Hunting Towers/Hunting Terrace on the agenda for discussion next month so that we can try to get some idea of what their ultimate plans are. Most of our discussions with them have related to the more immediate concern and that is the relocation and a satisfactory relocation. That was our first concern, but we will put that on the agenda. Mr. Cleveland and then Mrs. Pepper.
- Cleveland: Mr. Mayor, I don't know if a motion or something like that is in order but for us to at least go and try to work towards that, I know what the long-term goal is, but I would like to make a motion that the Council look into this in the long-term view and in that way we could try to work at both ends of it.
- Pepper: Second.
- Donley: A motion by Mr. Cleveland, seconded by Mrs. Pepper. Mrs. Pepper and then I think the City Manager wants to comment.
- Pepper: Well maybe the City Manager is going to address this, but I guess what I'm concerned about is when the chips are down and VDOT decides it wants to sell that property, the remaining buildings, however many are remaining at that point, they're really precious to us. They cannot not be replaced and I guess the concern I have is, and I know you have that concern, but the

concern I have is that I don't know if anywhere that we have it in writing or any kind of guarantee that whatever resale is done that those buildings will stay or be replaced for moderate- or low-income housing. And that's very critical that we have that kind of agreement, because when the chips are down, VDOT is going to sell it to the highest bidder for whatever and that is such precious land that what we could end up with are a series of very expensive residents or commercial property.

McVay: That's our concern and that's what we'd like to see. May I, I speak out of turn, sorry Phil, but I wanted to clarify that what we are asking that a group be, a task force, if you will, be set up would include people from the Hunting Terrace/Hunting Towers complexes, and people from CSB, and the long-named commission to work on this with the Council if that's possible.

Speck: Mr. Mayor.

Donley: Mr. Speck.

Speck: There are actually two issues here and one of them can be addressed, I think, fairly simply by a position asking for VDOT's position on what it intends to do with the properties. A general rule when its warehousing property it's always said you know they can go out and market it for highest and best use. So, I think the initial second transaction on this can be addressed by a request from VDOT that it intends to keep the property in its current use upon resale. The bigger concern though is that someone buying it can then choose to redevelop as happens.

McVay: Yes, that's why would like the easements on it.

Speck: So, the second level of this concern is that if we feel very strongly that we want to see this property maintained as affordable rental housing is to address this within the mechanisms that are in our control and that is our land use planning decisions about how we want to see property developed wherever it is. This is just one example of that. So, the VDOT issue, I think probably can be addressed by requesting their position on what they intend to do with this property upon the completion of the bridge project, but I do think that there is a legitimate concern about what happens at the next round and how we can protect that.

Donley: Mr. Sunderland.

Sunderland: Well, that was the point I was going to make. We always had in mind that beginning probably in 2004, that we would begin our process to amend the applicable small area plan down there to do just that to plan how we wanted, it's really our decision, how we want that area to be in the long run. And that would be done through a change to the small area plan. The analogy is not completely true, but it's kind of like Cameron Station. I mean that was government property going into a private ownership, but the fact is when government owns land you have more flexibility to tell you the truth in deciding where it goes then if it's in private ownership. So, you know 2007, the project is over, a two or three year or whatever it's going to be small area plan process is what I always had in mind. So, we were going to do just that and utilize whatever land use and master plan controls that we have and we will define what the area should be.

Donley: And one possible vehicle would be the suggestion of creation of a task force that would help us plan, and that's exactly how we did Cameron Station.

Cleveland: Mr. Mayor, I would like to amend my motion to include that.

Donley: Well, we can include it, but let me just ask a clarifying question because, you know if we have a task force that would start meeting now or start meeting later, and I think if we resolve to have a task force, I don't want to create community expectations without for an issue that might, you know, not become salient for a number of years. And so, I certainly think, why don't you include in your motion that the notion of a citizen task force to help plan the redevelopment or the or let's say the reuse of the land after the project is complete is what the Council would like to do. And then when that happens is really sort of the major question.

Cleveland: I would like to include the notion of a task force.

Donley: Mr. Euille and then Ms. Woodson.

Euille: Yes, Mr. Mayor, I certainly agree with Ms. McVay's concerns. As one of the co-chairs of the Woodrow Wilson Task Force this discussion comes up from time to time relative to the Hunting Towers site, and while we do have VDOT representatives at each of our meetings, time and time again, it's been reiterated to us that VDOT has no intent in terms of maintaining ownership of the property when the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project is

complete, that they would, you know, competitively put up the project up for bid like any owner of a property would do; however, the concern is very valid relative to its continued use. So, I think it's appropriate for us to take that position, but I also want to indicate that on Thursday when most of us will be in Richmond for the Virginia Municipal League's Annual Day, the City Manager and I, and I believe the Mayor, will be in a meeting with the new Secretary of Transportation, and so, we will have an opportunity to bring that forward at that time.

Donley: Joyce.

Woodson: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Mr. Sunderland, I have a question for you that governs what our real control can be given the fact we don't have rent control and that we can only make suggestions and hope that landlords will stay within that range of rent increases. With a small area plan we can dictate that we would prefer to have rental housing there but can't insist that there be rental housing there. Or can we?

Sunderland: Well, eventually you insist, you can insist on the type of use, and Ignacio may have to help me out here, in terms of commercial versus multi-family versus single-family and then you can zone it appropriately to prevent some uses that you do not want to occur. You can zone them out.

Woodson: You can zone out commercial, for example, but if you've got multi-family use there, a multi-family apartment building or a multi-family condominium building is multi-family.

Sunderland: It could go either way.

Woodson: Okay, so, we can't actually prevent an owner from turning it into a condominium other than create a requirement, or I guess there's probably already a requirement for relocation is that the case?

Pessoa: Mr. Mayor, I mean the mechanism that we've used in the past is and I can tell you these buildings do not comply with current parking requirements, we have a requirement that when the conversion occurs and typically a certain amount of money is put into the building that then they either have to comply with current parking or obtain a parking reduction special use permit from Council. That's the control mechanism that we had used in the past in other areas of the City to address the concerns that you are raising,

but that is not sufficient to prevent somebody candidly from going to condominium if they wanted to.

Woodson: That's smart. Sure.

Donley: We can, you know there's the zoning code and but then there's the small area plan, and we can develop some guidelines in the small area plan. For example, one of the things that we did at Cameron Station, the government's position could have been maximize the use, we're going to sell it all off, we went in in the small area plan and built in guidelines that set aside land for the parks, for example, and that prompted the government when they put it out to bid, there was an expectation that that land would not be used for development. Now, we could also use the zoning the tool, i.e., zoned it for park and open space and we were able to get the land. So, there is a two-pronged approach there, but in the guidelines that are developed in the small area plan, we can try to drive it towards affordable housing.

Woodson: Yeah. Where I was going with this in establishing what an owner's right would be once they take possession of the property is to perhaps assist in the ownership of the property that is affordable today with the use of some sort of a nonprofit vehicle. Whether it's a community development corporation or something else, because I think that's probably the only real model that we have at our disposal shy of us owning it which we don't intend to do to maintain affordable housing in the City of Alexandria or any place in the state in any state that does not allow for rent control. And we're not going to have rent control here, and I think we're all very clear on that. So, perhaps what we can also do in this interim period is conceive of some mechanism where we can actually assist a nonprofit in the purchase of the remaining buildings so that we can at least have some guarantee that for the foreseeable future they will remain as affordable units.

Sunderland: I mean, we certainly can do that and you will see some stuff in a couple of months on that, but I think that, I mean not Hunting Terrace and Hunting Towers, but I think, I mean, what I would suggest is we get around to 2004-2005, and we begin a two-year process that looks at two very general things, what we want the area to be in the next 10 to 20 years, and then how we get there. The same thing that we are talking about at Potomac West. It's kind of the what and the how, and the how if it's to keep the housing affordable is to look at the mechanisms like you are talking about, but we're

over the years, as you know, going to be looking at those mechanisms anyway.

Donley: We do have a motion and a second, is there any further discussion? All those in favor say aye, opposed no, it passes unanimously.

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